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### Deposited in DRO:

15 August 2008

### Version of attached file:

Accepted Version

### Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

### Citation for published item:

Amin, A. (2004) 'Multi-ethnicity and the idea of Europe.', *Theory, culture & society*, 21 (2). pp. 1-24.

### Further information on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0263276404042132>

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# **MULTIETHNICITY AND THE IDEA OF EUROPE**

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**July 2003**

***Theory, Culture and Society*, 21 (2), April 2004, pp1-24**

European romanticism ... is a tradition that as *tradition* is rarely confronted. It is assumed that the values of continuity and community,

that tradition and the transmission of the same, are *the* values to be extolled and defended. It is these values that confirm us in our *authenticity*. ... But is this not a conservative and reactionary myth that we who are of European descent tell ourselves in order to cling to *our* centrality in the understanding of home? While the rest of the world is forced to accommodate change and interruption, the continuity of tradition is conserved as a universal value by those who yield the power to define the 'universal'.

Iain Chambers (2001: 195)

## **Introduction**

The landmark new Constitution for Europe seeks to define not only the Union's competences but also the very nature of European belonging. Like similar landmark statements and treaties over the last fifty years, the Constitution is clear that the project of European integration – gathered around various economic and political reforms - will falter in the absence of a shared and mobilising cultural commons. And like its predecessors, it ends up defining the commons through heritage and tradition, around a perennial idea of European belonging based around four myths of origin: first, the rule of Roman law; second, solidarity based on Christian charity and mutuality; third, liberal democracy rooted in the rights and freedoms of the individual, and fourth, commonality based on reason and other Enlightenment universal principles.

It is worth asking, however, if this model of belonging is appropriate in an increasingly multicultural and multiethnic Europe. This is not to question the intrinsic merits of the core values, but to cast doubt over their power to fire the imagination and loyalty of a very large section of European society drawing on very different sources of identity and affiliation. Europe is now home to millions of people from non-European backgrounds, many religious and cultural dispositions, and many networks of attachment based on diaspora connections and cultural influences from around the world. Europe is as much a site of longings rooted in tradition – regional, national and European - as it is a site of trans-national and trans-European attachments. The latter attachments are not just held by so-called third country

communities and cosmopolitans living in the fast lane of global travel and hybrid identities, but also by native Europeans, now increasingly enmeshed in plural and global consumption norms and patterns. Slowly, Europe is becoming Chinese, Indian, Romany, Albanian, French and Italian, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist or New Age, American, Disneyfied, one-earth conscious, ascetic, and locally communitarian. It is becoming a place of plural and strange belongings, drawing on varied geographies of cultural formation. And, for this, it is constantly on the move in cultural terms.

What is it to be European in this context? Around what can such diversity be woven together in the name of a shared or common identity, one that does not work with a hierarchy of worth based on ethnic or racial markers? The prevailing Idea of Europe based on the above myths of origin has been seen as the defining cultural trait of the old continent, pitched against, at different times, to tribal 'barbarism', religious society, communist or communalist organisation, and individualism. After September 11 and all that it has led to in terms of the many rushed and thoughtless associations forged between Islam, rogue states and terrorism, many Western liberals have consciously returned to these core values to propose them with urgency as a new world standard of cohesion and civilisation, against the excesses of Americanism and, above all, the 'terrors' of religious fundamentalism (Dahrendorf, ).

This new appeal to an old Idea of Europe is dangerous on two counts in the context of the rise of a social world of increasing multicultural and multiethnic belongings. First, the murmur of a war of crusade between Islam and the secular West arising out of the debris of Bosnia, September 11, Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq, is forging a Euro-centric imaginary of a world split in two camps: a 'West' seen to be peace-loving and civilised because of its Enlightenment and Christian humanist values and an 'East' seen to be bellicose and infantile or irresponsible because of its religious zealotry and tribal behaviour. The old Idea of Europe - despite its claim to universals stripped of ethnic and national moorings - is once again lending its name to demarcate a space of progress and superiority against other worlds defined in ethno-religious terms. Wittingly or not, it is personified in the cultural practices of White, Christian, reasoning Europeans, and perceived as such, it is vulnerable to the anger of the world majority that is judged to be infantile, emotive and unreasonable. Western liberal

intellectuals are arrogant to believe in the superiority or universalism of the kind of thinking that underlies the Idea of Europe (Latour, 2002).

Second, as its universalistic moral pretensions come to be challenged by other world views - from Islam to post-colonial ideologies and a variety of new global lifestyle and consumption norms - the old Idea of Europe will prove to be increasingly vulnerable as a motif for unity in Europe. Who will it appeal to and who will care enough to be carried by it? What will it mean to cosmopolitans and everyday consumers riding the swell of global, made-up-as-you go, global affiliations? How will it fire the imagination and loyalty of minority ethnic groups with loyalties split between host nation and imagined communities dispersed around the world and in non-European histories? Indeed, will it mean much to the growing number of everyday folk in majority communities, who, destabilised by the presence of strangers in their midst as well as the complexities of multiple assaults on their identities, yearn for the simplicity and security of local community and ethno-national belonging? These yearnings for cultural difference and distinction within Europe itself, as the first part of the paper argues, make the old Idea of Europe a blunt instrument for unity in a Europe that paradoxically is both too big and too small for far too many people as a commons.

A new imaginary of European belonging is needed, it is argued in the second part of the paper; one that acknowledges cultural difference without assuming any order of worth based on ethnicity or religion, and one that is also able to forge a new commons based on values and principles that resonate across Europe's diverse communities. For this reason, it is claimed that the starting point cannot be the Europeanness of Europe, for example, long standing universals such as universal reason, Catholic piety, or the Protestant work ethic. Instead, an alternative starting point is suggested – one which happens to dig deep into a definition in Socratic Europe of freedom as the product of dialogue and engagement rather than the product of pre-given orders of worth. Such a starting point suggests that empathy/engagement with the stranger could become the essence of what it is to be 'European'.

The paper suggests that two important principles for a new Idea of Europe, both of which have been actively discussed in this journal in a recent debate on

cosmopolitanism (volume 19, 2002), spring out of this interpretation of what it is to be free. The first is the principle of hospitality, which Julia Kristeva has linked etymologically to the original Greek definition of *ethos* as the habit of regular stay or shelter. In a Europe in which we all will be strangers one day as we routinely move – whether virtually or physically – from one cultural space to another, the principle of refuge will become vital for many more than the minorities that currently need protection from persecution and hardship.

The second principle borne out of the Socratic reading of freedom is mutuality as the basis of identification and belonging. To be European, the paper argues, thus, is a matter of how strangers engage with each other to construct a common public sphere and ethos of solidarity (Calhoun, 2002). This process involves much more than the “reciprocal recognition of the Other in her/his Otherness”, as Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida (ref) have most recently argued in a call for Europe to be “united in its diversity”. Mutuality requires abandoning both nativist preconceptions of who has first call on the label ‘European’ as well as easy labelling of immigrants, travellers, ethnic minorities, third-country settlers, Muslims, cosmopolitans, dissidents, as ‘non-European’. Mutuality implies that Europeanness is not about possessing a pre-defined cultural identity, but about becoming European through active engagement with, and negotiation of, difference.

Why should it matter that Europe reflects on what it is to be European, on who can lay claim being European, and on what Europe’s common values should be? One answer is that in a multiethnic and multicultural Europe, a failure to give open publicity to the principle of empathy with the stranger, all that it represents in shaping identities as well as ensuring cultural change, will play into the hands of ethno-nationalists and xenophobes – abundant in number in both majority and minority communities – interested in perpetuating the fiction of homeland cultural identities in Europe. Europe has a clear choice to make. It can deny the processes of cultural heterogeneity and hybridisation daily at work and allow ethnicity-based antagonisms to grow, aided by an overarching White Europeanist ideal of the good life. Alternatively, it can recognise the coming Europe of plural and hybrid cultures and affiliations and seek to develop an imaginary of becoming European through engagement with the stranger, and in ways that imply no threat to tradition and cultural autonomy.

## **The Idea of Europe**

The Idea of Europe has a long and varied history, with much written on the topic (see, for example, Delanty, 1995; Heffernan, 1998). It builds on a long tradition stretching back to the late middle ages, proposing a common European identity based on reason, Christianity and democracy. It has been invoked in the name of: Peace in an often violent continent; Unity against a common enemy (Ottomans, Islam, Empire, Communism, Americanism; and difference from the Other - societies with different moral beliefs and cultural practices. In the 1950s, the architects of European unity saw integration, based on a common European ideal, as a way of decisively avoiding a repeat of the horrors of the Holocaust. In more recent decades, the Idea of Europe has been mobilised to lubricate the case for further economic and political integration, but also to signal Europe's 'civilising' mission in the world, exemplified by Jacques Delors in a lecture to the College of Europe in Bruges:

I find myself dreaming of a Europe ... which tends its immense cultural heritage so that it bears fruit, a Europe which imprints the mark of solidarity on a world which is far too hard and too forgetful of its underdeveloped regions ... the perennial values of Europe (quoted in Nielsen and Stubb, 1998: 68).

The Idea of Europe presupposes a commons based on four cardinal virtues with deep roots in an allegedly uniquely European contribution to world culture. These are, as summarised above, firstly the supremacy of a legal system based on Roman law; secondly, an ethos of social solidarity and common understanding based on Christian piety and humanist recognition; thirdly, a democratic order rooted in recognition of the rights and freedoms of the individual; and fourthly, a universalism based on Reason and other Enlightenment principles of cosmopolitan belonging. These four virtues have been vigorously debated in discussions that have fed into the making of the new European Constitution, and as ever, they feature large in its definition of Europe's defining ideal.

.... *in a multiethnic Europe*

At face value, there seems nothing objectionable about these lofty principles. Indeed, who can object as they seem to be no more than a synthesis of what counts as being modern, aligned to a global standard of freedom, equality and justice established by the Old Continent and mobilised by both liberal and socialist orders around the world against tyrannies and inequalities based on prejudice, fear and gross violation of human rights and individual or collective freedom? The answer is many, increasingly informed by a global consciousness that to be modern is not necessarily to be European (or American) and that the universals of Europe are just as constructed and ethno-culturally circumscribed as any other faith system. Such a consciousness of legitimate alterity strikes at the heart of the European conceit of what defines the free person, for as Bruno Latour (2002: 47) remarks in his recent diatribe against Western moral superiority, ‘most other parties do not recognize that there are humans, subjects, individuals or rights-bearers; instead exploring the free-floating individual they have multiplied the attachments – gods, fetishes, lineages, ancestors – that produce possible subjectivities; for them the Western individual is a monster that should be fiercely resisted’.

This ‘war of the worlds’ (ibid) that touches upon the fundamentals of what it is to be human and what it is to be free should not be seen as a war between countries and continents, but is one that is brewing within Europe itself, and for this, demands an inquiry into the legitimacy of the Idea of Europe as a unifying ideal. A sizeable proportion of the population in a number of member states consists of residents and citizens from a non European background. It is not easy to measure the size of this population, since the EU does not publish data on the ethnic composition or geographical origins of member state citizens, but only on the origins of non-nationals (i.e. residents who are not citizens of the given member state). This significantly underestimates the size of the immigrant population by not counting ‘non-natives’ who are citizens of that state (e.g. British Indians or Dutch Surinamese). For example, in Germany, non-nationals make up 8.5 per cent of the population, with 74 per cent of them originating from non-EU countries (CEC, 1997a).



A slightly better measure is the proportion of the foreign-born population, which includes immigrants who have acquired the citizenship of the host state, but not their off-spring born in the host state. In 1994 (CEC, 1998), the proportion of the foreign-born population in a selection of member states was the following: 9.7 per cent in Belgium, 41 per cent of which originated from beyond another EU country; 5.3 per cent in Denmark (of which 74% non-EU); 11 per cent in France (of which 78% non-EU); 9 per cent in the Netherlands (of which 88% non-EU); 6.8 per cent in the UK (of which 71% non-EU); 4.6 per cent in Portugal (of which 77% non-EU); and 9.9 per cent in Sweden (of which 60% non-EU). The inclusion of second and third generation citizens of immigrant parents would significantly inflate these figures (for example, according to the 1991 Census, the non-white population alone in Great Britain was 5.5%).

The member states have become multiethnic and multicultural societies. This is no longer a feature of only the ex-colonial nations such as Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, or countries such as Germany which imported cheap migrant labour to fuel economic expansion. It marks also countries such as Sweden, Austria, Italy, Greece and Spain in which recent immigration is related to global poverty and flight from repressive regimes.

One starting indicator of how far Europe is prepared for a 'war of the worlds' and the prospect of an 'assimilationist' consensus, gathered possibly around the core European ideals, are public attitudes in the EU towards immigration from non-EU countries. The results are ambivalent. In 1997, the European Year Against Racism, the Commission's *Eurobarometer* survey (CEC, 1997b) showed that 21 per cent of EU citizens felt that people from the 'South of the Mediterranean' wishing to work in the Union should not be accepted, 60 per cent felt that they should be accepted only with restrictions, leaving only 13 per cent who were willing to accept them without restrictions. The Spanish, Finnish, Irish, Italians, and Portuguese were the most accepting, while more than a quarter of the citizens of Belgium (38%), Greece, France (both 29%), Austria (28%), Germany and Denmark (both 26%) felt that these workers should be rejected. The attitudes to foreigners are equally disturbing. The same survey shows that on average 45 per cent of the EU population believes that there are too many foreigners in their country, 40 per cent believes that there are a lot (but not

too many), with only 10 per cent believing that there are not a lot. There are large variations in attitudes between member states, similar to the pattern concerning work migrants, with higher levels of tolerance shown in Finland, Ireland, Spain and Portugal, but with strong feelings against foreigners in Greece (71%), Belgium (60%), Italy (53%), and Germany (52%).

The central question, however, is whether multiethnicity/multinationality is seen to be threatening, and here, the results are counter-intuitive. The 1997 EU survey showed that most Europeans find the presence of people of another nationality (83%) or another race (81%) in their country not disturbing. This seems to be the pattern across Europe, but Denmark, Belgium and Greece are exceptions, with more than 25 per cent finding the presence of other nationalities or races disturbing. This overall and nation-specific pattern of opinion was unchanged in Spring 2000 (*Eurobarometer*, 53). The general picture, thus, seems to be that while controls on immigration are seen to be desirable by Europeans, the majority, especially those least wedded to national traditions alone, appear relatively sanguine – at least prior to September 11 – about the presence of other nationalities and ethnic groups already settled in their country. This is confirmed by table 1 which lists the fears of EU citizens associated with European integration, based on a Eurobarometer survey of public opinion in Autumn 2000. There are no directly xenophobic or racist fears, although anxieties over increased drug trafficking and organised crime as well as worries over loss of national identity, could be linked with increased immigration in the minds of respondents.

Table 1. Most Important Fears Among EU Citizens

Fears	% of EU Citizens
Transfers of jobs to low cost countries	60
Difficulties for farmers	60
End of national currency	58
Increase in drug trafficking and organised crime	56
Other potential members costing EU too much	53

Loss of social benefits	51
Less EU subsidies	48
Loss of national identity	47
Richer countries paying more for others	45
Loss of language	42
Loss of power for small states	38

Source: CEC, Eurobarometer, 54, 2000

### *Europe travelling light?*

How do these mixed attitudes towards foreigners relate to the Idea of Europe? One interpretation is that the signs of tolerance towards others are indicative of an emerging postnationalism or ‘banal cosmopolitanism’ (Beck, 2002) based on everyday cultural mixture and hybridisation (e.g. through consumption), one that has no real need for a grand unifying project such as the traditional Idea of Europe. This is a Europe ‘travelling light’ (Pieterse, 1999, 2001), carried forward upon the actuality of multiple identities and multiple senses of territorial identification: a plural Europe in continual cultural flux as a consequence of powerful forces of detraditionalisation yielding:

Individuals ... enmeshed in multiple bonds of belonging created by the proliferation of social positions, associative networks and reference groups. We enter and leave this system much more than we used to in the past. We are migrant animals. ...Thus we are subjected to mounting pressure to change, to transfer, to translate what we were just a moment ago into new codes and new forms of relation (Melucci, 1997: 61).

Zygmunt Bauman (1997) has claimed that the ‘overwhelming feeling of uncertainty’ and ‘ambient fear’ (p. 50) ensuing from detraditionalisation, deregulation, new world disorder and indeterminacy, puts us in the midst of a new ‘heterophilic age’ in which the ‘question is no longer how to get rid of the strangers and the strange, but how to live with them – daily and permanently’ (p. 88). This interpretation opens the possibility of a Europe of multiple and mobile identities, a Europe moving

irreversibly towards cosmopolitan attachments. The result would give Europe a very different common ideal, centred on defiant transnational identifications, demonstrating that the original Kantian peace formula based on cosmopolitan law and universal rights can be reinvigorated to normalise and protect the idea that being European is commensurate with celebrating nomadic identities (Joseph, 1999) and cultural mixture. A new Idea of Europe, playing on ‘cool loyalties’ to the state and ‘thin patterns of solidarity’ (Turner, 2000: 28) across all sections of society - minority and majority, indigenous and migrant.

But, all of this assumes the cosmopolitan ethos is widespread, and here, the picture of Europe ‘travelling light’ is mixed. First, to return to Melucci (1996: 116), the condition and consciousness of the ‘multiple self’ are two very different, possibly conflicting, states:

... there is a profound moral implication: the necessity to keep and to lose, to cope with fears and resistances, but also with the ability of going beyond our given identities. [...] The possibility of meeting each other needs a big leap in consciousness, to allow people to accept that they exist as separate individual and social groups, but no less that they can *co-exist* and communicate.

Without a ‘big leap in consciousness’ – which is unlikely as long as the European project continues to breed indifference or hostility – ‘fears and resistances’ may well dominate reaction to a perceived erosion of boundaries and threatened national identity. Is this not one way of interpreting the contemporary resurgence of racism, ethno-communalism, religious fundamentalism and nationalist sentiment in Europe? A Europe without old certainties of belonging, exacerbating a defensive attitude to change and an intolerance towards difference. The many flashpoints, across Europe, of ethnic cleansing, violence towards immigrants and asylum seekers, national flag-waving, regional separatism, minority demands and majority backlashes, provide ample evidence of this possibility.

Then, there is the question of in whose name we can invoke the label hybrid or cosmopolitan. In the considerable debate that there has been on this issues, Jonathan

Friedman (1997: 79) has argued compellingly that it describes a restricted cultural elite – ‘post-colonial border-crossers’ such as poets, artists and intellectuals. Similarly, Robin Cohen (1998: 15) comments:

There are those who celebrate the new uncertainty principles, who explore the luxuriant phenomenology of fragmentation and fluidity for their own narcissistic purposes, and fetishise the borderlands as sites of cultural or political transgression; en route the migrant and asylum-seeker, the unemployed and the down-and-out: all those in need of ... security and safety ... are often transfigured into a kind of nomadic postmodern hero by those who take all that for granted.

Recently, Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2001) has responded to this type of criticism by reasserting that the history of human and non human life is one of layered hybridisation, such that the essentialisation of fixed and pure categories, rather than hybridity itself, is the analytical problem. For him, ideas of hybridity highlight the errors of a ‘social proclivity to boundary fetishism’ (p. 1) responsible for perpetuating ‘us’ versus ‘them’ thinking, while the reality remains that of ingrained mixture across the social and geographical spectrum. It may well be that hybridity is more of an everyday phenomenon than its critics assume, but they are right to point out that the celebratory literature glosses over the material and cultural politics of many social worlds involved in little transgression. One such world is that of people who find themselves at the bottom of the social heap - from immigrants and migrants to disaffected youths and the unemployed – often forced into enclave groups and enclave practices for their material and social well-being (through choice and prejudice).

But enclavism is a more general affliction, for across the ‘mainstream’ in ‘ordinary’ households, neighbourhoods, workplaces and public spaces, the silent unmooring of community and tradition by hyper-modernisation and globalisation, is reinforcing a strong desire for tangible boundaries against others. We might all be hybrids as Pieterse claims at the level of our daily cultural practices, but few of us seem to accept this, as it questions our own purity and superiority over the outsider. Some cultural conflicts in Europe can be seen in these terms: as a worry of cultural loss resulting from integration, Americanised consumerism, Brussels ‘bureaucracy’, immigrants and

asylum seekers, and the rise of ethnic and other regionalist movements. These are very real worried drawn around sharp geographical and cultural boundaries to mark difference; a far cry from happy hybridity.

### ***Tradition and Difference***

Difference matters, and above all to minority ethnic and cultural groups. Take aspects of the cultural practices of the 17 million Muslims in the EU as an example. The early sobriety, piety, and conformity of first generation Muslims (Werbner, 1996) has produced nothing like Europeans or cosmopolitans with dark skins among later generations in Britain, France, Germany and other European countries (except, possibly, among mobile, semi-detached, liberal professionals like me). Instead, as Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (1998: 39) puts it:

Interestingly, young, highly educated Muslims are developing a new sense of superiority through victimhood. Many are attracted to the idea of *intifada* and of an unworkable, though romantic, pan-Islamic identity, and that the notion that they can live within their own ideological and religious imaginary territories.

Alibhai-Brown argues in the case of British Muslims that the spectrum seems to be polarised between those for whom Islamic identity matters most (with ‘integration the last thing on the minds’) and young Muslims who see ‘themselves as past of a wider movement of other disenfranchised groups seeking a place for themselves in society’ (*ibid*; see also Ristilammi, 1996, for a compelling account of Muslim alterity constructed through such alliances in Malmö). Either way, Europe plays no positive role: ‘except for the widespread view among black and Asian people that Europe is a white fortress against the developing world or that we here in Britain are in someways better off than those ‘ethnic minorities’ living in our partner countries, there is no engagement with the EU project’ (Alibhai-Brown, 2000: 8-9).

Instead, there is an alternative geography of affiliation at work, involving diaspora links and strong claims on the society of residence/citizenship. Like their parents and grandparents, young Muslims see themselves as different from the national majority,

but unlike them, they also claim the nation as theirs. No longer Muslims in Britain, France and Germany, but British, French and German Muslims, and for this, stakeholders in the national community like anybody else. A telling aspect of the recent ethnic disturbances in the towns of northern England, but also a common feature of contemporary ethnic minority protest in French, German, Belgium, Dutch and Scandinavian cities, is that they were about more than recognition for minority needs. Instead, in claiming neighbourhoods, streets, parks and monuments as theirs, the young protestors have fundamentally questioned assumptions about who owns the public sphere hitherto assumed to be white majoritarian and structured around national heritage bound conventions. What seems to have most outraged local white residents, the media and the national psyche is that ‘immigrants’, despite their legitimate claim to national citizenship and birth, should have the audacity to alter the symbols of local and national belonging, rather like asking the Queen to wear a veil. In all this, Europe remains uncannily absent as a space of affiliation, despite its significant implications for national minorities and majorities, ranging from the impact of economic and monetary union on jobs and livelihoods and displacements associated with the free movement of people, to centralised decision making in Brussels or Strasbourg over major political issues.

Of course, ethnic alterity is not worn by everyone as a marker of difference, for, as Jeff Spinner-Halev (1999: 69) notes:

When a devout Sikh serves as a Canadian Mountie, eats hamburgers at home, attends Toronto Blue Jay baseball games on the weekends, and when his children attend the University of Toronto where they partake in their own form of cosmopolitan life, then he and his family are living the cosmopolitan life, one that draws on several cultural traditions.

But we should not get too carried away. Accompanying the cosmopolitanism consumption comes ethnic loyalty as a source of communal security and cultural nourishment. This is precisely why, with every step towards national and European cultural assimilation, has grown the demand for denominational schools, cultural and religious autonomy, travel to the ‘homeland’ or stories of ‘home’, and reconstructions of family and diaspora histories (Werbner, 1996). Such desires need not be read as

isolationist rejection of the mainstream, as often depicted in the mass media, but as endorsement of strongly felt shared ethno-cultural affiliations. In as much as ‘cultures are internally plural and represent a continuing conversation between their different traditions and strands of thought’ (Parekh, 2000: 337), it is also a truism that ‘human beings ... live within a culturally structured world and ... place considerable value on their cultural identity’ (p. 336).

Much more worryingly, the discourse of ethno-cultural difference is playing into the hands of fundamentalists who demand a Europe of blood-and-soil based territorial belonging, cleansed of immigrants and ‘foreign’ cultural influences. Racism and xenophobia have become trans-European phenomena, no longer restricted to individual nations which can be conveniently dismissed as exceptions to an otherwise intact European tradition of equal rights, freedom and solidarity. The naked racism of twenty to thirty years ago against non-white immigrants in Britain, France and Germany, played on the allegedly ‘different endowments of human races’ (Stolcke, 1995) as a basis for discrimination and violence against particular immigrant ethnic minorities (Turks, Indians, Pakistanis, Afro-Caribbeans, North Africans) in housing and labour markets, access to various political and social rights and on the streets and the media. Some of this continues to remain – perhaps in less naked form and among consciously racist individuals and organisations – but it has also spread to countries of more recent immigration. Many of these early horrors have been replicated in Italian responses to immigration from diverse African countries in the 1980s (Melotti, 1997) as well as in Swedish and Danish reactions to liberal asylum policies towards persecuted peoples around the world. As so aptly captured in the title of Allan Pred’s (2000) book, racism in its various permutations is now evident *Even in Sweden*, the cradle of progressive social democracy and liberal values.

But a new racism, more accurately a new ‘cultural fundamentalism’ (Stolcke, 1995) that plays on cultural difference as a justification for ethnic separation, has grown as a pan-European phenomenon, in both old and new countries of immigration (Modood, 1997). While the old form was all about keeping immigrants out or sending them back as undesirable or ill-fitting aliens, the new phenomenon expresses anxieties about the negative implications – both for ‘us’ and ‘them’ of ‘having them in our midst’. They and their cultural practices – from worship and ideology to consumption



and recreation – will dilute and undermine our sacred traditions and our ethno-national integrity. As Verena Stolcke (1995: 12) summarises:

Contemporary cultural fundamentalism unequivocally roots nationality and citizenship in a shared cultural heritage. ... The assumption that the territorial state and its people are founded on a cultural heritage that is bounded, compact, and distinctive is a constitutive part ...

Even declared xenophobes and nationalists – increasingly drawing on all sorts of white-black alliances - have become cultural relativists alongside ordinary folk, fighting campaigns to rescue national or regional cultural heritage, complaining about encroachment from Europe, worrying about the threat posed by the rights claims of minorities (e.g. special schools, recognition of festivals, holidays and customs, funding for associations) and suggesting ways of keeping the ethnic communities separate (from ghettoisation to voluntary repatriation and tight immigration controls). The new mood works less on the exclusionary politics of genus, than one based on loyalty to national cultural stereotypes, with the right of membership possibly spanning across ethnic boundaries (e.g. that cricket loving Indians support England at a test match against India, or Palestinians wave the ubiquitous national flag in Denmark or gather around Swedish maypoles wild-eyed with enthusiasm on May-day). Now, the test of belonging is based on culture rather than colour and feature, but it is just as exclusionary and just as intolerant of cultural mixture.

To summarise, viewed from a range of subject-positions, the new Europe of porous borders seems less a space of happy hybridity, cosmopolitanism, and ‘old’ European values, than one of exclusions of varying intensity in the name of cultural difference. Indeed, ironically, the new cultural fundamentalism often draws on the same politics of difference as found in progressive arguments in favour of recognising multicultural rights and group autonomy. As Jeff Spinner-Halev (1999: 65) argues:

A multiculturalism that tries to create a society with several distinctive cultures deeply threatens citizenship. In this kind of multicultural society, people are not interested in citizenship; they are not interested in making the state a better place for all; they care little about how public policies

affect most people or about their fellow citizens. Even the term “fellow citizen” might strike them as strange. What they have are fellow Jews, or fellow blacks, or fellow Muslims, or fellow Sikhs. Citizens, however, are not their fellows.

In this cultural context, the old Idea of Europe seems particularly inappropriate as a symbol of cultural unity and dialogue.

### **Another Idea of Europe**

What is it to be European in a space of marked mobility and transience, multicultural presence from around the world, and weak attachments to a place called Europe? Is it worth reinventing Europe as an ideal or should this aspiration be buried under a pragmatism in the service of European economic and political integration, leaving social and cultural matters to local and national resolutions? Is the politics of difference – nationalist, diasporic, or pluralist - the best we can hope for, to be contested at the level of the nation state and other spheres of meaningful affiliation and engagement with others?

I strongly believe that it is worth reinventing the Idea of Europe, because every step of integration brings shared problems and developments that require a common standard, and because it can claim in the name of Europe a new transnational ideal of social justice, belonging, and cultural tolerance. But it is not the ‘Europeanness’ of Europe that I wish to defend - long standing common cultural habits such as Catholic charity, the Protestant ethic, or pasta and Beethoven. Instead, what I want to defend is a certain ethos, one of empathy for the stranger and of becoming through interaction, supported by a framework of rights that draw upon elements of European political philosophy, including the Enlightenment ideal of universal freedoms and the French Revolution ideal of an equal and solidaristic society. Pitched at this level, the discussion involves a return to certain abstract principles of political philosophy and their amendment and extension, in order to push Europe’s multicultures in new directions. As such, it carries no heavy baggage of European cultural traditions imposed over a reluctant cosmopolitan, Americanised, nation-centred or diasporic populace, but it does require a commitment to political community ‘bound by the ties

of common interest and affection' (Parekh, 2000: 341) that is far from easy to inculcate and achieve.

According to Julia Kristeva ( ), there is a 'European vision of freedom' or 'concept of human dignity' (p. 43) that is quite distinct from the American liberal tradition of rights and freedoms which she ties to the utility and calculus of science and economic advancement. She speculates that the European 'social experience' and 'way of thinking' (p. 40) may be based on:

The intimate, the particular, the art of living, taste (*gôut*), leisure (*loisirs*), pleasure without purpose (*plaisirs pour rien*), grace, (*grâce*), the incidental (*le hasard*), playfulness (*le ludisme*), wastefulness (*gaspillage*), our 'damned side' (*la part maudite*), or, to cut it short, freedom as the essence of 'the being in the world' prior to any 'cause'. (p. 42).

I am not convinced by the distinction that Kristeva wishes to make between a utilitarian America and a poetic Europe, or by her cultural descriptors of Europeanness (though I agree that they desperately need recovering in our age of fast consumption and calculative organisation). Instead, it is the 'idea of being in the world prior to any cause' that I find attractive as a philosophical core for a multicultural Europe. Kristeva again:

There is ... another vision of freedom that emerges in the Greek world, at the very heart of its philosophy with the pre-Socratics, and which develops in the Socratic dialogue. Without becoming subordinate to a cause, that is, previous to the concatenation of Aristotelian 'categories' that are already a premise for scientific and technical thinking, this fundamental freedom relies on *being* and, moreover, *on the being of language that is being delivered (l'être de la parole qui se livre)*, which delivers to itself and to the other, and thus sets itself free (p. 40, original emphasis).

### ***Hospitality and mutuality revisited***

Two fundamental principles for a new Idea of Europe spring from this social ontology, abstract principles that have to do with the standard of human dignity and cultural respect in Europe, rather than the common cultural traditions of the European people. It could be objected that the discussion of a unitary project at this level is unnecessarily foundational, but the unsavoury truth is that it is necessitated by the growing indignities we are witnessing in Europe heaped upon asylum seekers, third country immigrants, Muslims; indignities often questioning not only their right of presence but also their basic human rights.

The first is the principle of hospitality, which Kristeva links etymologically to the original Greek word *ethos*, meaning the habit of regular stay or shelter. This is an inspiring and relevant ethos for a Europe distinguished by global ethnic and cultural mixture and intense human mobility: the Idea of Europe as hospitality towards the stranger. For Kristeva, 'we can build something from this solidarity because we all belong to a future type of humanity that will be made entirely of foreigners/strangers that try to understand each other' (p. 35). Jacques Derrida (2001) has proposed that in Europe, a practical step towards would be a return to the medieval idea of cities as sites of asylum and refuge (interestingly, he considers states far too enmeshed in the culture of vilification of non-citizens): cities that once again can offer the outsider now seen as 'guest' a safe haven through the rights of visitation and residence (see also Conley, 2002 for an argument on why European cities are especially suitable for this role).

We should go much further, however, for there is work to be done at the spatial scale of Europe itself, in order to ensure that the ethos of hospitality does not end up becoming restricted to a small number of urban safe havens, while the rest of Europe carries on as usual. The figure of the refugee – now a mass figure in Europe, but with virtually no rights – should force a radical rethinking of the modern standard of conferring full rights through national citizenship. What sense does it make that Europe continues to restrict the rights of its growing army of non-citizens, and worse still, since 9/11, question their very human rights in the so-called war against terrorism (Bauman, 2002)? In a new Idea of Europe, the principle of refuge, not

national citizenship, could become the central right of recognition, as Giorgio Agamben (2000: 23-24) demands:

We could conceive of Europe not as an impossible 'Europe of the nations', whose catastrophe one can already foresee in the short run, but rather as an aterritorial or extraterritorial space in which all the (citizen and noncitizen) residents of European states would be in a position of exodus or refuge; the status of European would then mean the being-in-exodus of the citizen (a condition that obviously could also be one of immobility). European space would thus mark an irreducible difference between birth [*nascita*] and nation in which the old concept of people ... could again find a political meaning, thus decidedly opposing itself to the concept of nation .... This space would coincide neither with any of the homogeneous national territories nor with their *topographical* sum, but would rather act on them by articulating and perforating them *topologically* as in the Klein bottle or the Möbius strip, where exterior and interior in-determine each other. In this new space, European cities would rediscover their ancient vocation of cities of the world by entering into a relation of reciprocal extraterritoriality.

I will return to the question of what kind of rights, and for whom, in the next section.

The second principle for a new Idea of Europe that can be taken from Kristeva is publicity for mutuality as the keystone of cultural constitution in a multiethnic Europe. A familiar refrain in contemporary cultural theory and postcolonial writing is that identities are mutually and dialogically constituted. This is an important premise to situate the social psychology of hospitality itself, which could quite easily be reduced to a requirement of tolerance/pity/empathy on the part of those who are secure and who play the role of host towards the stranger as a needy or destitute figure, which, as such, continues to carry a whole baggage of European moral superiority with it. Equally, hospitality could be read as 'unconditional responsibility for the other', arising 'as a response to fragility and suffering, intimated ... in the silent command addressed to me by the other, convoking me to justice and love' (Venn, 2002: 76), a reading that too is never that far from judgements of moral

obligation towards the wretched. In contrast, entangled with the principle of mutuality, hospitality is rendered a two-way process, a relationship of openings and recognition, as Mustafa Dikec (2002) argues, based on '*giving spaces* to the stranger where recognition on both sides would be possible' (p. 229, emphasis in original). The upshot is that:

Hospitality is not about the rules of stay being conditioned by a duality of host and guest with unequal power relations leading to domination; it is about a recognition that we are hosts and guests at the same time in multiple and shifting ways. Hospitality, in this sense, is a refusal to conceive the host and the guest as pre-constituted identities. It is about the recognition that they are mutually constitutive of each other, and thus, relational and shifting as all identities are (Dikec, 2002: 239).

But, note that the effects of co-constitution are not straightforward. Our embodiment of mobile and multiple identities through our varied interactions with others and with diverse cultural influences in a globalising world rubs against our need for the stranger and strangeness as a boundary object; as not me, as the undesirable or different other. The stranger is in us but also not one of us. This paradox is beautifully captured in the following passage which captures the ambivalent questions of belonging raised by the presence of an age-old traditional Arab scribe writing letters for the illiterate, perched on a street-corner in the centre of fast, modern, Paris: What to make of the right of presence in Europe of this stranger? Why, indeed, refer to him as the stranger?

Wearing sandals, a turban, wrapped in a *djellaba* against the autumnal chill, sitting opposite a brand new school, a multicoloured tubular-stepped piece of postmodern architecture, the immobile dignity of this public writer emphasises the disturbing presence of the stranger. His pen, his language, his being, is coeval with mine, I could turn away and pretend that he no longer exists; that he is merely a quaint remnant of yesterday's immigration from the 'Third World', from the Maghreb. I can choose to see in his presence merely the intrusion of the exotic and the archaic in the mundane of modernity. But I can also register a trace, not merely of

another world largely hidden from my eyes and understanding, but rather the trace of a language and history that seeks a response, and a responsibility, in mine. Apparently a foreigner, this, too, is clearly his city – certainly more than it is ‘mine’. Forced to consider the composite realisation of modern space as it comes into being in this cosmopolitan place called Paris, I also register the alterity that is both integral to it and to the modernity I presume to possess. For the Arab scribe sitting patiently on the corner of a modern, Western city is not a historical accident. Separate, yet indissolubly linked, his presence both interrupts and reconfigures my history, translating the closure of my ‘identity’ into an aperture in which I meet another who is in the world yet irreducible to my will (Chambers, 2001: 205-6).

For Iain Chambers, the challenge of recognition and cultural openness requires a different subjectivity and language, an ethos of journey and incertitude, of acceptance that to be European is to inhabit a ‘site that will perpetually cite the unhomely, the uncanny’, drawing ‘from history a politics of fulfilment whose outcome is never known in advance’ (op cit: 207). Similarly, Luce Irigaray (2002: 141) suggests that mutuality requires knowledge of ‘how to intertwine love of the same and love of the other, faithfulness to self and becoming with the other’, so that ‘cultural fertility ... would result from listening and the effects of mixing’. This is a tall order, calling forth a certain ethical or behavioural consciousness to which few will wish to commit or know how to commit. Europe as the moment – with all its talk of market freedom, individual advancement, impermeable borders - seems to be in no mood to replicate the kinds of cultural experiment launched by the New Left and the student movement in 1968. Indeed, Irigaray too acknowledges that this is a ‘new agenda, for which we lack the training’ (p. 141).

### ***... Beyond the inter-subjective***

Perhaps the challenge, then, is to take up the principle of mutuality at a level beyond the inter-subjective, but as a framing condition for the latter, through its incorporation into a new political philosophy for Europe that ‘accept[s] the reality and desirability of cultural diversity’, but whose ‘constant concern is to keep the dialogue going and

nurture a climate in which it can proceed effectively, stretch the boundaries of the prevailing forms of thought, and generate a body of collectively acceptable principles, institutions and policies' ((Parekh, 2000: 340). Living with others, thus, requires collective endorsement and enforcement through certain shared political rules and values.

For Parekh, two political philosophies can contribute: liberalism, through its emphasis on the rights and freedoms of the individual, underpinned by certain institutional preconditions such as freedom of expression, basic ethical norms and a responsive structure of authority; and a dialogic multiculturalism, based on rights and freedoms of group identities and cultures, coupled to 'essential political virtues as mutual respect and concern, tolerance, self-restraint, willingness to enter into unfamiliar worlds of thought ... and the ability to persuade and live with unresolved differences' (op cit: 340). A new Idea of Europe could endorse this dual philosophy, and by doing so, unsettle the prevailing nationalist imaginaries in whose name so much damage is currently inflicted on immigrants and other strangers demonised for their race and ethnicity.

But there is more. Embedded in the principle of living with/becoming through others lies a commitment, in a Deleuzian sense, to a 'diagrammatic' rather than a 'programmatic' politics; one that explores the potentialities of 'making visible something unseen' (Rajchman, 1999: 42) and accepts the future as a 'question of novelty' (*op. cit.*: 46). No pursuit of a pre-determined idea of the good life in a new Europe. Agonism, or the democratic clash of an equal and empowered public, as the substance and goal of political engagement is a key concept here. This shifts the emphasis from a pre-given idea of being European to the idea of becoming European, confident that the juxtaposition of heterogeneity can unlock a 'process of becoming something other, we know not yet what' (*op. cit.*: 48), hopeful that empathy emerges from:

an attachment to that which differs from you growing out of glimmers of difference in you, an attachment that takes the form of forbearance in strife and generosity in interdependence rather than a quest to close up the distance between you through formation of a higher unity. ... This ethos



of agonistic respect amidst a world of dissonant interdependencies is crucial to the fabric of democratic politics: ... it folds a pathos of distance into democratic relations of contestation, collaboration and hegemony (Connolly, 1993: 195, cited in Schrift, 2000: 156).

For all the reasons discussed in this paper, there is no guarantee of a 'pathos of distance' in a free market of multicultural engagement in Europe, but as theorists of radical democracy have suggested, a public sphere that openly acknowledges the right of difference and also offers ample opportunity for the less powerful to stake - and win - their claims (with the help of rules such as those suggested above by Parekh) can constructively channel adversarial politics. A European public sphere shaped along these lines would advocate 'a plurality of forms of being a democratic citizen' (Mouffe, 2000: 73), and 'a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality' (p. 102), so that cultural politics can be played out as a contest between friendly enemies (agonism) rather than antagonists. What is crucial is that in such a political space outcomes are tied to the *process* of participation itself; no model citizen, no teleology, no essentialised idea of what it is to be European.

This signals a Europe of 'minor politics', following Gilles Deleuze's distinction between minority and minor politics. While minority politics is often a politics of recognition, relying on fictive ethnicity, a minor politics assumes that 'in some sense we are all potentially from a strange "nowhere" prior to "territorial" definitions', a 'people to come' (Rajchman, 1999: 50). The disruption of national(ist) state democracy by European integration and globalisation, provides a perfect opportunity for such a reinvention of the political, introducing 'into the concept of democracy the as yet unrepresentable "time" of minority' (*op. cit.*: 52). The promise that Europe is a 'people to come', 'fundamentally incomplete, a postcolonial locus of multiple diasporas' (Werbner, 1997: 263).

### ***Back to the Commons***

These tracings of another Idea of Europe carry powerful symbolic value, which, however, without appropriate practical actions will fail to find popular support. I want to argue in this final section that a small but significant practical step towards

Europe as a post-national polity is the deepening and extension (to residents, not just citizens) of constitutionally protected universal rights. These are rights from which follow material protections and benefits, and through this, the possibility of a ‘constitutional patriotism’ (Habermas, 1998) towards Europe as well as a commons capable of sustaining agonistic invention.

A place to start is the upward harmonisation of political, social and economic rights and standards as universal rights that are seen by people to offer material benefits from European citizenship. The different member states discriminate differentially between their own or EU nationals and non-nationals in the offer of rights. They vary in their policies and attitudes towards immigration from beyond the EU. They offer different welfare rights (from health coverage to education and benefits) as well as economic rights (e.g. minimum wage, industrial relations, coverage for part-time workers). They vary in their treatment of ethnic minorities (e.g. autonomism in the Netherlands, cultural tolerance in Britain, assimilation into the national imaginary in France). It is hardly surprising that, for example, the Scandinavians fear the Union as a drain on high domestic welfare standards and the British worry about the loss of political freedom, and the European ‘South’ see the Union as a way of enhancing domestic welfare rights, while all the national majorities see immigrants as a further drain on resources, ‘taking from “us” to give to “them”’ (Markoff, 1999: 32). EU-level universal rights might help to moderate such politics of envy, in addition to giving people with multiple loyalties a good reason for wanting to be part of the European project.

But, to return to an earlier theme, who should be entitled to the rights – citizens of the EU alone or also residents without EU citizenship? This is a vexed and much debated question in the literature on rights in the Union, but I am inclined to agree with Yasemin Soysal (1994) that if the interests of immigrants are to be taken seriously, the rights of citizenship should be decoupled from their national constitution and offered, instead, as trans-territorial rights of person-hood based on residence rather than citizenship in the EU. Similarly, Rainer Bauböck (1995) has argued that all foreigners should enjoy all political rights as soon as they satisfy residency requirements. In other words, residents would carry with them the same bundle of rights within the EU and eligibility would no longer depend on national citizenship,

the acquisition of which is notoriously difficult for immigrants, not least because of its many more guarantees compared to residency status alone.

This controversial proposal does not come without its own difficulties, such as the possibility of fortress-like policing of who is allowed into Europe or stricter residency rules and intrusive checks on compliance. But, on the other hand, it does equalise the status of all those who find themselves resident in Europe. As Gerald Delanty (1997: 299) notes:

If residence is more fully established as the basis of European citizenship, the dimension of inclusion can be enhanced. European citizenship could then become not merely relevant to the some 5 million citizens of the member states living in other states of the Union, but also to the some 10 to 15 million immigrants.

This equalisation of status, and the geographic and cultural mobility it offers, might also help to loosen the strong ties and loyalties to nation that has been encouraged historically by the coupling of rights to national citizenship. It might, as Turner hopes (2000: 30), inculcate an ‘ideology of membership which will celebrate the uncertainty of belonging where our “final vocabularies” are never final’. In this way, loyalty and commitment may become the product of travel and mobility in a Europe of peripatetic citizenship.

What kind of rights might be included in an EU-model of post-national citizenship? Soysal has largely human rights in mind, but the coverage can be extended to include other rights – political, economic, and social. To my mind, welfare rights are central among these in terms of their offer of immediate material benefits as well as the change to become someone or something else through education, shelter, health-care, and so on. Gerald Delanty (1997: 293) argues, ‘unless the European Union can reproduce the welfare state on a supranational level ... there is little point in making pleas for a meaningful kind of European citizenship’. Interestingly, however, the missing words in Delanty’s claim are ‘a very unlikely prospect’, and I am inclined to agree with the view that throughout the history of European integration, national governments have jealously defended their control over welfare decisions as a tool of

fiscal and electoral control. But we may be at a time when, with increased mobility, immigrant presence, welfare variety (on a downward slide) within the EU, there is stronger popular support for a European welfare state.

This is not the place for discussing the details of which welfare rights might be pooled and which retained at the national level. I wish simply to make the basic point that there is much to be gained for inter-culturalism in Europe through a new EU model of citizenship based on trans-European universal rights. It strikes me as less divisive than any attempt to force people to conform to a pre-given Idea of Europe, and more inclusive than never-ending recognition of group-differentiated rights and identities.

## **Conclusion**

At the moment, there is a glimmer of inter-governmental interest in a Europe of the commons supported by enhanced universal rights. The European Charter on Fundamental rights has strengthened the protection of human rights, and in doing so extended coverage to non-citizens. In turn, Article 21 prohibits discrimination based on sex, colour, ethnic and social origin, language and religious belief. It could provide some of the freedoms necessary for Europe as a space of experimentation towards a new model of belonging and becoming. But, it is only a small step and one surrounded by many more EU and national violations of the freedom and potential of the stranger.

A Europe of the commons – including the principles enshrined in the new European Constitution - will have to cease being a Europe of toothless declarations. For one, the threat of racism and xenophobia is real, frightening, and culturally regressive. I consider it a failing that while the member states have rushed to unite in tightening EU borders on the grounds that excess immigration poses a threat to security and exhausts scarce welfare resources (even if economic migrants are grudgingly welcomed), they have not taken decisive action to punish racism and tackle other forms of cultural fundamentalism. Since the late 1980s, the European Parliament has produced inspiring declarations against racism in Europe, there is some wonderful binding legislation against racism (e.g. Article 13), there is close monitoring of incidences of racism and xenophobia, and the Commission has put forward many

proposals for directives to protect displaced persons, third country nationals who are long term residents, and refugees or asylum seekers. Yet, these seem to be rarely invoked, and action is left largely to national governments, who, in turn, have not pressed as strongly as they could for effective EU-wide action, possibly because this leaves them the option of using national anti-racist policies for appeasement ‘at home’ and vilification of other nations in the Union.

Of course, Craig Calhoun (2002) is right in noting that a constitutional patriotism based on ‘thin identities and normative universalism’ (p. 157) supported by a regime of rights such as those described in the last part of this paper, will not ‘achieve a sufficient solidarity to be truly motivating for its members’ (ibid.). As Calhoun argues, the latter requires an active, plural and agonistic public sphere beyond the state and its regimes of rules, working as a living ‘realm of cultural creativity as well as rational discourse, and a realm of mutual engagement’ (p. 171), so that ‘new ways of imagining identity, interests, and solidarity’ (ibid) are daily fashioned, thus allowing the ‘nature of life together [to be] chosen *as it is constructed*’ (ibid, emphasis in original). On the other hand, it is also surely the case that a Europe of the minorities and minor belongings, stripped free of an old baggage of Eurocentric values, also requires a regime of extended constitutional rights.

## Acknowledgements

This paper develops and extend arguments first published in Amin (2001). It has been presented and benefited from discussion at a number of venues, including as a keynote lecture at the Third International Conference of Critical Geography, 25-28 June, 2002, Bekescsaba, Hungary, and as the Seamus Heaney Lecture at St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University, 10 February 2003.

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